



# SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE

## MEDIA OUTREACH

### WRITING AN EFFECTIVE PRESS RELEASE

A timely, well-written press release is an important tool in an effective media outreach plan. While small newspapers may run the release word-for-word or with minor changes, other media (in fact, the majority) use it as background information to craft their own articles. Either way, the release is the key vehicle for generating media interest; thus, taking the time to make it as powerful as possible is worth the effort.

As you prepare for your **National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)** events, you may want to distribute a press release announcing your organization's most important and/or newsworthy activity during **Recovery Month**. Whether you use the sample press release provided at the end of this document or write your own, you can follow these guidelines for writing an effective press release.

A press release distributed to local media by fax or e-mail on the day of your event, as well as in press kits handed out at your event, provides more detailed information than the snapshot you may provide in a one-page media advisory sent to media in advance of your event.

While the brief media advisory serves to entice media attendance at your event, a press release can help the media flesh out their stories. For example, the press release can contain quotes from local officials and mention other activities your organization is planning along with your main event. If you have multiple newsworthy activities planned, you may wish to distribute a separate press release for each of your other activities, if they can stand on their own, or you may wish to issue a news release with an attached fact sheet describing all of the events being hosted in your community for **Recovery Month**.

For example, a **Recovery Month** observance release may be considered newsworthy if your organization:

- Honors a local individual or organization as part of the **Recovery Month** celebration
- Plans an event to issue a **Recovery Month** proclamation by a local lawmaker or other official
- Conducts seminars or workshops featuring a local or national celebrity speaker
- Forms a special task force to address local concerns
- Publicizes the local impact of a national news event, such as the **Recovery Month** kick-off in Washington, D.C., and your local angle on that activity
- Begins a new type of service or makes significant changes to existing services
- Announces the results of a poll, survey, or study on alcohol and drug use disorders
- Launches a new public education program

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Refer to the press release template at the end of this fact sheet when writing your **Recovery Month** press release. You may use this template as the basis of your press release, making sure to edit it as necessary for your event (particularly updating all placeholders that have been highlighted in bold and listed in brackets throughout the release). Electronic versions of this and other templates are available on the CD-ROM in this planning toolkit, as well as on the **Recovery Month** Web site at [www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov). Here are some tips to help you write your release:

- **Stick to a traditional format.** Releases should be issued on your organization's letterhead or on the **Recovery Month** letterhead provided in this kit. At the top of the page, include the name and phone number of a contact for more information. The release should begin with the name of your city and the date. If the release is longer than one page, type "more" at the bottom of each page except the last. Signify the end of the release by typing "###" centered after the last sentence.
- **Keep it short.** A **Recovery Month** release should be no more than two pages, double-spaced; it should contain short sentences and paragraphs.
- **Give the most important details first.** Begin with a headline that summarizes the release. The first paragraph should answer the five basic questions about your activities during **Recovery Month**—who, what, where, when, and why.
- **Mention your local activities early in the release.** The local audience will be most interested in what is happening in your community during **Recovery Month**.
- **Be careful with language.** Avoid using slang or technical terms dealing with alcohol or drug use disorder issues. If necessary, explain terms.
- **Check for accuracy.** Be sure to verify all spelling, statistics, names, and titles in your **Recovery Month** release.
- **Write factually.** Opinions should be expressed in direct quotes only. When quoting an individual in your **Recovery Month** release, get consent before publishing.
- **Seek placement.** Distribute your **Recovery Month** release at your event and via e-mail or fax to local print, broadcast, and Internet reporters in your community on the day of the release's date. An explanation of how to develop a media distribution list is provided with the sample media advisory. Follow up by phone to encourage media to write or air a story. Try to schedule an interview with an official of your organization to give the media additional information. Collect samples of any resulting coverage to document your outreach efforts.

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You are encouraged to share your plans and activities for *Recovery Month 2004* with SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, your colleagues, and the general public by posting them on the official *Recovery Month* Web site at [www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov).

We would like to know about your outreach efforts and community success stories during *Recovery Month*. Please complete the Customer Satisfaction Form enclosed in the kit. Directions are included on the form.

Please send any of your organization's *Recovery Month* promotional samples to:

Office of the Director, Consumer Affairs, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, SAMHSA, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockwall Building II, Rockville, MD 20857.

For additional *Recovery Month* materials, visit our Web site at [www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov) or call 1-800-662-HELP.

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## For Immediate Release

**Contact:** [Name – *Must be a person who can answer questions from the press*]  
[Phone number (*include cell phone number if the person is not always available at the office*)]

**Sample headline:** **COMMUNITY FORUM [OR OTHER EVENT] ADDRESSES BARRIERS THAT KEEP [CITY]'S RESIDENTS WITH ALCOHOL AND DRUG USE DISORDERS FROM TREATMENT**

—[*Number*] people here want treatment but cannot get it, experts say—

[*city, state*], [*date*]*—*More than [*number*] of [*city*]'s residents have an alcohol or drug use disorder, yet only an estimated [*number*] have accessed the area's treatment facilities, according to experts who spoke at a forum today held to address residents' access to drug and alcohol treatment services. At the event, [*name of a particularly prominent local official*] discussed with [*list other event participants, such as local employers, members of the treatment community, etc.*] ways to overcome barriers to treatment for drug and alcohol problems.

Sponsored by [*name and phrase identifying your organization*], the [*event*] was part of a national initiative known as the **National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)**, which is supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This year marks the 15<sup>th</sup> annual observance of **Recovery Month**, which celebrates people in recovery from alcohol and drug use disorders and promotes the need for better treatment access.

"Alcohol and drug use disorders have devastating health and societal consequences, and our community is not immune to these problems," said [*full name of local spokesperson, title, and organization*]. "**Recovery Month** is an opportunity for us to highlight the benefits of treatment and encourage people with drug and alcohol problems to begin their journey of recovery."

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## [Your organization name] Takes Action

Today's [event] featured [provide a few sentences detailing who participated and specific questions that were addressed].

To build on this event's momentum, [your organization name] has planned additional events during **Recovery Month**: [Give detailed examples such as those listed below.]

- A community forum will take place on [date/time] at [location]. Forum participants will discuss [list specific treatment-related topics, such as how to help area teens find age-appropriate treatment programs].
- Brochures will be distributed [explain where, how, and starting when, such as at a booth at the (name of health fair) on (date) or at the checkout counters of (supermarket name) starting (date)] to give educators, faith leaders, parents, local employers, and others tips on how to recognize when people have alcohol or drug use disorders and help them find treatment programs.
- [A run/walk or other fundraising event] will be held on [date/time] to raise money to fund new alcohol and drug use disorder treatment programs that will be designed specifically for local residents with drug or alcohol problems who also have a mental disorder.

## **Recovery Month—A National Effort**

During **Recovery Month** each September, communities nationwide join together to help people recognize that alcohol and drug use disorders are treatable diseases. Research shows that treatments for alcohol and drug use disorders are as effective as treatments for other chronic conditions—yet nationally, only 10 percent of Americans who need treatment for alcohol or drug use disorders actually receive it.

The **Recovery Month** 2004 theme, "**Join the Voices for Recovery ... Now!**" encourages communities to take immediate action to improve local residents' access to recovery. **Recovery Month** celebrates the successes of people in recovery and acknowledges men and women in the treatment field who dedicate their lives to helping people with alcohol and drug use disorders.

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